Public Works Director Karl Keel, Planner Julie Farnham, Civil Engineer Jen Desrude and Councilmember Steve Elkins at the Commuter Choice Awards in Minneapolis.

Choice accolades

City recognized for promoting alternative transportation

The City of Bloomington was recently honored with two awards at the 2010 Regional Commuter Choice Awards.

The City was recognized for its efforts in finding creative ways to encourage employees' use of alternative transportation. In 2009, the City Council passed a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) ordinance that requires developers, who build a structure with 350 or more parking spaces, to submit a plan documenting how they will promote alternative transportation methods. The ordinance is the first of its kind in Minnesota.

Additionally, the City was honored for partnering with 494 Commuter Services and the I-494 Corridor Commission in the promotion of alternative transportation options.

City of Bloomington Civil Engineer Jen Desrude accepted the Commuter Choice Award, Individual Category, for helping to develop the TDM plan that she currently manages for the City. Desrude was also honored for promoting the use of alternative transportation to City employees through her work with 494 Commuter Services and the creation of an employee commuter group.

A new way to work

494 Commuter Services

Are you considering a different way to get to work everyday? 494 Commuter Services can help by providing the following resources:

- **Ridematch list** – Individuals with a similar work trip who are interesting in sharing the ride.
- **Transit information** – Personalized trip planner, pocket schedules for bus or train, *How To Ride Guide*.
- **Bike commuting** – Map showing recommended on-street bike routes and off-road bike trails, tips for biking to work, Minnesota bike laws.

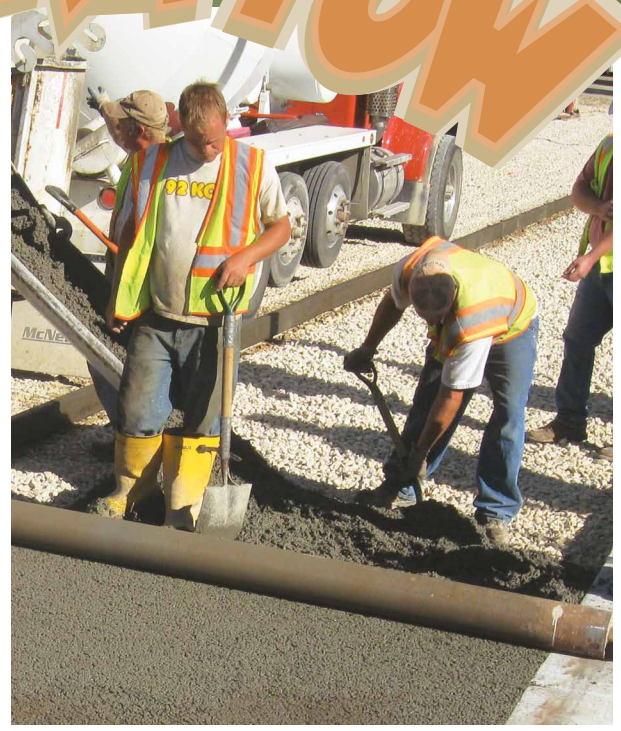
For more information, visit www.494corridor.org.

Earth Action Heroes protect the earth. Whether it's saving energy or guarding Bloomington's precious natural resources, these individuals are making a difference. Here are your neighbors in action...

Earth Action Heroes

The Watershed Warriors

Ka-Pow



In 2008, as part of an ongoing, City-wide effort to be more sustainable, Bloomington Public Works embarked on a journey to reduce the impact of urban runoff through its storm water management practices.

As a result, when it came time to resurface the parking lot at Harrison Park, 1701 West 100th Street, instead of using regular pavement that allows storm water to run off and pollute Nine Mile Creek, the City decided to try an innovative alternative: pervious asphalt pavement and rain gardens.

How is pervious asphalt sustainable?

The pervious asphalt that Public Works used differed from the standard variety in that it contained very little of the fine aggregate that normally creates a dense, impervious pavement. The porous quality of the asphalt and rock base soaks up storm water, reducing annual runoff by 90 percent.

Rain gardens soak up any additional runoff.

Fast forward to two years later, as 250 gallons of water were dumped onto the parking lot and quickly disappeared into the pavement, confirming the pavement's sustainability.

"The project is exceeding our expectations," Senior Engineering Technician Steve Segar said. "People are taking notice. The project site has been toured by local water resource professionals, engineers and municipal officials from all over the state."

There are other benefits to the pervious pavement. In the winter, no sand or salt is required to maintain the lot. A plow removes excess snow, while the remaining snow melts into the pavement.

The pervious parking lot pilot yielded such good results that other areas of the city are being looked at to receive the same treatment.

Developers in the Penn-American District will be using pervious asphalt in portions of their parking lots. The City anticipates that other developers will follow suit.

Public Works decided to use pervious pavement – this time pervious concrete – to repave its parking lot. The pervious concrete, like the pervious asphalt, allows rainwater to infiltrate the soil instead of running into the storm sewers.

In addition, Public Works has made numerous other changes to improve safety and sustainability. A trellis and canopy were constructed on the east side of the building to reduce glare and save on air conditioning costs.

A rain garden also was created on the north side of the building to capture storm water from the roof and reduce runoff into nearby ponds and streams.

"In previous years, the rainwater drained across the parking lot and into the sewer, creating icy, slippery conditions for employees and visitors to the building," Segar said. "The rain garden should solve this problem."

For more information, call Steve Segar at 952-563-4533.

Website keyword: Sustainability.

You can be a watershed hero

Stop storm water where it drops

What is a watershed? A watershed is an area of land from which rain and melted snow drain into a lake, wetland or creek.

Most of the land in Bloomington's watershed is developed. This means that about 34 percent of our land is covered with hard, impervious surfaces that can no longer absorb rainwater. This poses a problem because storm water running off hard surfaces, such as rooftops, roads and driveways, harms Bloomington lakes and wetlands through the pollutants it carries. Storm water runoff also causes flooding and increases erosion.

You can make a difference by stopping storm water where it drops and preventing excess water from running off your property. Once stopped, water either soaks into the ground, evaporates or is used for gardening.

How to prevent storm water runoff

There are several easy and economical techniques available to stop and infiltrate water.

- Use downspouts to direct water onto lawns. Having roof water run off and spread across your lawn will allow the water to infiltrate your soil.
- Purchase a rain barrel to capture water from roofs. An 80-gallon barrel emptied regularly can capture 3,275 gallons of water per year.

- Plant a rain garden. A 100-square-foot rain garden can capture and infiltrate 9,000 gallons of water per year. Native plants in a rain garden increase infiltration and attract a variety of birds and butterflies.

For more information, contact Engineering at 952-563-4870.

Rain gutter and Rain barrel © BigStock.com.